

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

- 1-5. (Canceled)
6. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 14, wherein the ionic liquid which is recovered from the work-up stage is recirculated to the column.
7. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.
8. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.
9. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.
10. (Previously presented) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰C are used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein the side offtake is positioned in a stripping section of the column which has a plurality of plates including three bottommost plates, and wherein the side offtake is positioned directly at a bottommost plate in the column.
11. (Previously presented) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰C are used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein a bottom stream which has been

depleted in high boilers is recirculated to the column, and wherein the bottom stream is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.

12. (Previously presented) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰C are used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein a bottom stream which has been depleted in high boilers is recirculated to the column, and wherein the bottom stream is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.

13. (Previously presented) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰C are used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein a bottom stream which has been depleted in high boilers is recirculated to the column, and wherein the bottom stream is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.

14. (Currently amended) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰C ~~are~~ is used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein the bottom stream from the column is passed to a work-up stage in which the ionic liquid present is submitted to vaporization in order for separation of high-boilers still present.

15. (Previously presented) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ionic salts which are liquid at

temperatures below 200⁰C are used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from a column in vapor form via a side offtake, wherein the bottom stream from the column is passed to a work-up stage in which the ionic liquid present is submitted to stripping in order for separation of high-boilers present.

16. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 15, wherein the ionic liquid which is recovered from the work-up stage is recirculated to the column.

17. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.

18. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.

19. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.